of facilities for treatment is the ' index of suspicion ' of medical agencies in the mind of the patient.

The editors state in one of their joint chapters that, though optimism pervades public health circles in respect of the complete eradication of syphilis, " the gaps in our knowledge are ample warnings that vigilance must not be relaxed. This is the moment, not for the demobilization of the vast forces that have been developed to combat syphilis, as some advocate, but, rather for the consolidation of all efforts to prevent the disease in all its aspects ".

I have picked out for special mention in this review the application of the methods advocated to the control of syphilis ; the editors define epidemiology as " a science concerned with the study of factors that influence the occurrence and distribution of disease, defect, disability, or death in aggregations of individuals ", and they declare that we must get away from the original conception of epidemiology as dealing only with *infectious* diseases.

The general pattern of the new epidemiological method is this :

(*a*) statement and definition of the problem to be studied
(*b*) appraisal of existing information
(*c*) formulation of hypotheses
(*d*) testing of hypotheses
(*e*) conclusions and practical application.

The application of this method to such conditions as hypertension, suicides, and accidents is described.

The following quotations are also worthy of mention :

Statistics is a tool of epidemiology and skill in its use is as essential to epidemiology as is skill in the use of clinical diagnostic instruments in the practice of medicine.

In the U.S.A. there has recently been a spectacular achievement in the prevention of gonococcal arthritis. In the U.S.A. there are about one million new cases of gonorrhoea annually, in whom, until recently, about 3 per cent. developed gonococcal arthritis, commonly some 10 to 30 days after exposure. It has now declined to 0·5 per cent. There is no evidence that strains of gonococcus exist which have a predilection for joints.

Many children with positive reactions to serologic tests (for syphilis) at birth are not actually infected. The test merely measures placentally transmitted reagin.

Forty years ago, general paralysis of the insane caused 10 per cent. of the mental hospital admissions : now it is less than 1·0 per cent.

There is a first class, unbiased, and unemotional account of the British National Health Service, and a valuable commentary on current controversies in the U.S.A. on medical care programmes. It is stated that the annual cost per person of the British National Health Service is less than half the amount spent in the U.S.A. from private and public purses on medical and dental care.

The book is readable, comprehensive, and a stimulator of thought, and should find a place on the bookshelves of all who wish to keep up-to-date with transatlantic thought on the prevention of disease. A. D.

Syphilitic Optic Atrophy. By Walter L. Bruetsch. 1953. Pp. 140. 30 figs. Thomas, Springfield, Ill., U.S.A.; Blackwell, Oxford. 40*s*.

This monograph appears at an opportune time. The development of blindness in the late stages of syphilis, coming on slowly and inexorably some 20 years after the infection has been incurred, either in the congenital or acquired disease, has been recognized in a vague way for over a century and was fully established in the 1880s by such writers as Fournier, Erb, and Westphal. To-day, although the incidence of the disease is much less in Great Britain than it was 25 years ago, it is still an important cause of blindness, while in the United States it has been variously estimated that there are between 25,000 and 50,000 persons blind from this cause. From time to time many theories have been advanced to explain the implication of the optic nerve, and until the revolutionary work of Lére in 1904 it was generally accepted that the main lesion lay in the ganglion cells of the retina ; the atrophy was thus considered, and usually called, " primary " optic atrophy. Pathological examinations have been relatively few, but the histological material gathered by Bruetsch fully bears out the view of the early French author that all cases of the disease have the characteristics of a secondary atrophy due to an inflammatory meningitis at the base of the brain affecting usually the intracranial portion of the optic nerve and the chiasma. It would therefore seem logical to substitute the term " syphilitic " for " primary " optic atrophy. While the pathological material presented in this monograph is of very great value, the therapeutic corollary is of still greater importance, for the author contends, and he backs up his contention with impressive material, that if diagnosed in its early stages the progress of the disease can be arrested. This is a new view-point in a condition hitherto considered hopeless, and depends upon the results of newer methods of therapy by malaria and penicillin which, in the author's view, should replace arsphenamine therapy. Early diagnosis in suspected cases—a matter which depends primarily on a close study of the peripheral visual fields—is thus of paramount importance and holds the key to the initial elimination of a disease which hitherto has been almost uniformly associated with tragedy.

The monograph is short, easily read, beautifully illustrated, and persuasive in its argument ; it will be of unusual value to the syphilologist, the neurologist, and the ophthalmologist as well as to the general physician. S. D-E.